**Example Council Homelessness Reduction Act Implementation Plan: Version 1**

**This Action Plan has been developed to include the recommendations of the Report commissioned into the potential impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 on the local authority**

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| **Desired Outcome** | **Description** | **What needs to be done** | Lead Officer responsible | Timetable |
| 1 | **Raising Member and Corporate understanding within the Council of the likely impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and secure the funding needed to prepare and implement the Act** | **Action:** **Report to Corporate Director/s in the Council to decide on the format and recommendations of a report to Council members to include the recommendations from the Consultants report on the Impact**  **Proposed actions and dates**   1. The conclusions from the Consultant’s HRA impact report to be submitted to the Housing Services Director 2. To seek Council Corporate Management and then Council Member approval for the recommendations in the report and specifically the recommendations re protecting current and anticipated implementation funding and Government Grant funding as set out in the report. 3. Implement the recommendations and changes to the Structure, roles and responsibilities and working processes set out in the Consultant’s Impact Report |  |  |
| 2 | **Working in Partnership to prevent and tackle homelessness arising from the new duties in the Homelessness Reduction Act**  **1) Obtaining a commitment from all relevant statutory and voluntary sector partners to work in partnership to successfully implement the new model of prevention to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act**  **2) Deliver the Homelessness Reduction Act objective to provide better early intervention prevention work through partnership working**  **3) Deliver bespoke prevention help through Personal Housing Plans as required by the Homelessness Reduction Act and to seek to make the Personal Housing Plans a live and evolving plan through partnership working**  **4) To develop a service user strategy for consultation and feedback** | **Action 1 to deliver: Set up a Sub Group of the Example Council Homeless Forum to:**  a) Plan how prevention work will be delivered through greater partnership working  **Proposed actions and progress**:   1. Requests via the Homeless Forum have been made for members to form a sub group and organisations have come forward      1. First meeting of the sub group to take place in *x 2017* and terms of reference to be agreed 2. Overall aim is that all relevant partners sign up to a new **“Homeless Prevention Charter”** structured around the partnership aims of the Homelessness Reduction Act   **Action 2 to deliver: Obtain the commitment of each partner agency to being partners in prevention to deliver the HRA.**   1. Work to commence with each partner to identify their organisations role and agree their contribution in helping to deliver early intervention prevention work and to set out their contribution 2. Objective is to provide effective prevention help and advice through the principle of ‘no wrong front door’ Applicant would be able to receive the same quality of advice from any partner agency even if the delivery of specific prevention actions may be the responsibility of the Council or a specific agency in that partnership. The model would work on the concept of a ‘**Hub and Spoke’** model with the Options Service being the Hub and the partner agencies being the spokes with consistent messaging and advice available from all ‘signed up’ partners.   **Action 3: Introduce bespoke Personal Housing Plans:**  **Actions set 1: Delivering Personal Housing Plans through the Housing Options Service**  Introduce Personal Housing Plans at the earliest opportunity to pilot and refine the plans in time for the implementation of the HRA.  **Action set 2: Delivering Personal Housing Plans in Partnership**  Example Council will develop a system with selected partners who will have access to the persons personal housing plan (with consent) to help keep the PHP and the actions relevant and live to increase the chances of a successful prevention outcome  Introduce concept of prevention help being delivered through Personal Housing Plans that are used by all accredited prevention partners to record their contribution to prevention help   1. This will involve developing a system whereby copies of all PHPs will be stored on a password protected server – *To be explored possibly using the standard “My Example Council” Customer Account* 2. Applicant will be given password and link to own their own Personal Housing Plan 3. All partners to be asked to follow a protocol whereby they can (with the customers consent) to add, amend and support the delivery of that plan   This is to realise the objective of the plan being a live and evolving set of actions to be taken with support from the Council and Partners to try and achieve a solution.  **Action set 3: Piloting delivering PHPs through selected partners**  Example Council will work through options for devolving the delivery of personal housing plans to selected internal council departments and selected external partners   1. Develop a list of relevant potential internal and external partners where the issuing of a PHP could be devolved 2. Discussions will take place with all possible partners selected on how they could deliver PHPs 3. The aim would be to have pilots in place by November 2017   **Action set 4: Piloting other ways of delivering PHPs that recognise that some applicants understand information delivered through other means than by written notification**  Action is to develop models for delivering PHPs through other means in addition to a written plan   1. Consider whether it would be possible to develop visual plans – develop what these might look like and decide whether a pilot is feasible 2. Consider whether it will be possible to develop spoken word plans including a link option so that the spoken word plan is available to download   **Action set 5: Develop Pathway Plans for a number of specific vulnerable groups**  Example Council in response to the new section 179 advice duty in the HRA will as will be required by the new legislation develop and pilot **Pathway Plans** – These can be seen as a specific form of a Personal Housing Plan for specialist vulnerable groups who may have more problems in preventing homelessness or help to obtain accommodation. Applicable where a persons’ housing problem is ‘more than needing a roof’.  **‘Pathway Plans’ will be developed to provide meaningful prevention help, support, and an accommodation pathway for:**   * 1. 16/17 year old homeless cases   2. Care leavers   3. Hospital discharge cases including mental health   4. Leaving prison or young offenders   5. Service personnel homeless on leaving the armed forces   **Action 4: To develop a service user strategy for consultation and feedback**   1. To develop a Service User consultation and service design panel or group. This could be a virtual panel, and, or a small consultation focus group and would be supported to meet bi monthly 2. To commission a ‘mystery shopper’ review of the service quality to provide a check of the service at the commencement of the HRA and every 12 months after*.* |  |  |
| 3 | **Improving the quality and effectiveness of prevention work to meet the requirements of the new prevention and relief of homelessness duties set by the Homelessness Reduction Act**  **1) Develop and introduce new prevention focused casework resource toolkits targeting the 2 main causes of homelessness in Example Council - parents/relatives exclusions and section 21 notice cases.**  **2) To introduce the *‘Offer to Resolve’* model**  **3) To pilot sustainment plans at the point of ending a prevention, relief or main duty** | **Action 1 to deliver:** Introduce new prevention casework toolkits to improve the quality of early intervention prevention work for the 2 main causes of homelessness  **Action 2 to deliver:** Review effectiveness of the new prevention approaches by measuring specifically prevention outcomes for all parental/extended family exclusion cases and all AST/Possession action cases at 6/12/18 months after introduction compared to prevention rates prior to introduction for these 2 main causes  **Actions 3 to deliver: Introduce a ‘Formal Offer to Resolve’ Model to structure prevention casework**  Example Council will introduce the concept of making ***‘a formal offer to resolve the problem’*** to any person wishing to exclude covering all approaches where there is a threat of homelessness relating to a notice for any tenure, or withdrawal of a permission to live with parents, relatives or friends (with the exception of anyone at risk of violence or harassment from the excluder)  This is not a requirement of the new Homelessness Reduction Act but Example Council believe it is an essential model to give discipline to prevention work and to ensure everything has been tried before it is accepted that homelessness cannot be prevented.  This is different to a personal housing plan and covers a formal written bespoke offer to resolve the problem that has been identified and made to the person wishing to exclude or repossess (in AST/tenancy cases)  **Action 4 to deliver: To pilot sustainment plans at the point of ending a prevention, relief or main duty**  To introduce sustainment plans at the point of ending a prevention or relief of homelessness duty to reduce the risk of ‘revolving door’ homelessness. This is especially important given the new legislation will allow the prevention, or relief (help to secure) duties to be ended with any accommodation offered or secured that is likely to be available for 6 months |  |  |
| 4 | **Improving the quality and effectiveness of help to single applicants to help them to find accommodation under the Relief duty in the Homelessness Reduction Act** | **Action 1: Extra support to help single people secure accommodation**   1. The Options Service will introduce ***‘the offer to speak to any family of friends to help secure accommodation’*** model for all single people who are homeless and not owed an accommodation duty. The aim is that this simple promise to speak to any family or friends where no accommodation duty is od may make the difference of helping the person to obtain some form of accommodation 2. There will be a number of new accommodation initiatives developed specifically targeted at helping single people secure accommodation (see below) |  |  |
| 5 | **To develop more effective self-help to support prevention of homelessness work**  **The objective is to develop models to promote the concept of *Customer Choice and Empowerment* as a core principle for how the new prevention duties should be delivered in Example Council.**  **The Self-Help principle is enshrined in the Homelessness Reduction Act and Example Council will support applicants (who are able to help themselves) to seek a solution with the support of the Council backed by the offer of bespoke practical resources.** | **Encouraging the principle of self help for applicants who are not so vulnerable that they are able to help themselves to find a solution Self help on line resources**  This will be achieved through several strands of work  **Action 1:** **Developing a fully interactive on-line self help prevention and options advice module**  Discuss and possibly invite quotes from Abritas, Capita, Locata or another of the 5 main providers of Homelessness and Advice modules to provide a self help product  **Action 2: Develop practically focussed Self Help Packs to be provided to applicants at the earliest point where an approach for help is made**  Develop self help packs for the main causes of homelessness and for single people and families who are homeless when they present  **Action 3: Providing clear facts and illustrative materials on what solutions are available so people can understand their options quickly**   1. Example Council will develop a suite of illustrative materials giving facts on the likely housing solutions available 2. These will cover:    1. Fact sheets on social housing prospects    2. Fact sheet on where people can afford to live and what they can afford   **Action 4: Develop a ‘passport to Independent living model’ to support the principle of self-help**  Example Council to develop a new approach to parents seeking to exclude – Where the conclusion is that there are tensions at home and a desire to see son/daughter into independent housing to provide very practical help and support to try and engage parents and applicants through a more honest approach to address the *housing need problem* rather than the *homeless in crisis* problem and to prevent it becoming a homeless in crisis problem.   1. This is to support parents where they feel they might have to go through with a threat to exclude to obtain help 2. Provide solutions that are planned and therefore more likely to be sustainable through the person being more ready for independent living. 3. Setting this out in a new model called **‘Passport to Independent living’** setting out help and support and milestones for the person to seek to achieve working towards being ready for independent living |  |  |
| 6 | **Treating Customers with Compassion, Understanding and Empathy to tackle the *culture change* intended to be brought about by the Homelessness Reduction Act** | **Action 1: Changing the language used in statutory notification letters**  Example Council will change the language used in all contact with customers for Example Council: advice letters and statutory decision letters to avoid technical language and bureaucratic framework to be replaced by plain English explanations and clear information on customer options, e.g. – this is what is likely to happen if you go down avenue A versus this is the likely outcome if you choose avenue B rather than language that indicates the customer will be ‘punished’ in some way. The aim is to develop new ‘plain English’ notification letters in a language and style that is more customer focused |  |  |
| 7 | **Develop a number of new initiatives to support the new section 189B ‘Help to Secure Accommodation Duty’ for single people and families** | **Action 1: Providing a new *Accommodation Finding Service* tailored to find a solution based on a customers informed choice**  A new Accommodation Finder Service is to be developed to search for private rented accommodation in any area of the County where the Council and the applicant agree that is realistic and affordable for a household to consider living in.  The new service will be based on the following key principles:   1. People should be given all the information available to freely identify what accommodation options are realistic and affordable 2. They will be offered the new service and supported to secure any accommodation options in whatever area that is affordable based on a clear discussion and acceptance by the client 3. They will receive bespoke practical help and materials to help them secure including information on any guarantees re deposit, rent in advance, landlord incentive package, etc   **Action 2: Set up a Residential Lodgings scheme to increase accommodation options for single people**   1. Develop what staffing resource will be needed to operate a new Residential Lodgings Scheme 2. Recruit staff to run the service 3. Develop the paperwork and procedures to operate the new Lodgings Service This initiative will include exploring the concept of single people sharing accommodation |  |  |
| 8 | **To work with the DCLG and Trailblazer Councils to prepare the IT changes that will be required by the new legislation** | There will be 2 aspects of this work:  1) To develop and test the new P1E reporting requirements with the IT provider for the Homelessness Casework recording and P1E return. This will involve working with the Trailblazer local authorities currently developing the new P1E framework with DCLG. |  |  |
| 10 | **Anticipating and tackling problems that may undermine the successful implementation of the new prevention model**  **Action Tackling potential recruitment and retention of staff problem** | These actions recognise the common problem facing Housing Options Services across the UK namely the inability to recruit experienced staff leading to delays in implementing changes. Furthermore there is often a difficulty in retaining staff.  **Action: Example Council will pilot a new recruitment model to tackle this to include consideration of:**   1. Develop recruitment along the principles of the Government’s 3% apprenticeship model and linked into the concept of a Housing Academy. 2. Pilot a system of recruiting a pool of staff to any new vacancies (or any new posts agreed as growth to implement the HRA) based on their competencies and ability to carry out tasks rather than their exiting experience. The model could work on the basis of: 3. The pool will look to recruit local people where possible 4. People will be recruited on a generic training job description with common competencies 5. The team would undergo intensive training into all the areas of work. Training would be a mix of classroom and in role training 6. As vacancies occur people who have met delivery standards and are ready will be able to move out of the pool into vacant full time posts |  |  |
| 11 | **Start work on preparing an updated Homelessness Strategy and Review to reflect the changes brought in by the Homelessness Reduction Act** | **Action: Review to Council’s Homelessness Strategy**  The Homelessness Strategy does not have to be formally reviewed until 2020 however, it must be kept under review in the context of any major changes. The Homeless Reduction Act will fundamentally alter the approach to preventing and tackling homelessness and therefore the Strategy will need to be reviewed and updated in time for implementation of the new duties in April 2017. |  |  |